



# FOCUS for Military Families

*Families OverComing Under Stress*

*Strengthening Resiliency for Military Families and Couples*

## **Warrior Resilience Conference IV**

Kirsten Woodward, MSW, LCSW, Family Programs Division Head



F•O•C•U•S

# Presentation Goals

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- ❑ Overview of FOCUS Program, Mission and History
- ❑ Key Communication Tools
  - ❑ FOCUS Website & Quarterly
  - ❑ FOCUS in Social Media
  - ❑ FOCUS World
- ❑ FOCUS Adaptation for Recovering Warriors and their families in remote locations



# Challenges of Military Families & Children

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- ❑ Extended and repeated separations from a primary caregiver in the context of danger
- ❑ No access to installation based services
- ❑ Altered family roles and responsibilities
- ❑ Increased stress on caretaking parent
- ❑ Community level stress / loss
- ❑ Media and communication exposure
- ❑ Impact of combat exposure on returning parent
- ❑ Possible parental mental health problems, physical injury, or loss



# F\*O\*C\*U\*S

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FOCUS (Families OverComing Under Stress™)  
provides resiliency training to  
military couples, families and children.

It teaches practical skills to meet the challenges  
of deployment and reintegration, to  
communicate and solve problems effectively,  
and successfully to set goals together and  
create a shared family story.

# Major FOCUS Milestones

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- March 2008 USN BUMED contracted UCLA to implement FOCUS Project for USN and USMC initially at 7 sites (USMC, NSW, Seabee).
- June 2009 FOCUS sites expanded to serve 14 USN and USMC sites plus USMC WWR.
- September 2009 Purple site expansion at 4 sites for Army and Air Force.
- In 2010, FOCUS adaptations created for Wounded Warriors, Couples, and Early Childhood.
- In 2010, on-line adaptation of FOCUS services (FOCUS World) and remote version of Family Resiliency Training for Recovering Warriors and their families.
- July 2011, FOCUS began fourth service contract year with USN BUMED.

# Public Health Strategy for Implementation

## FOCUS Project Suite of Services for Family Centered Care:

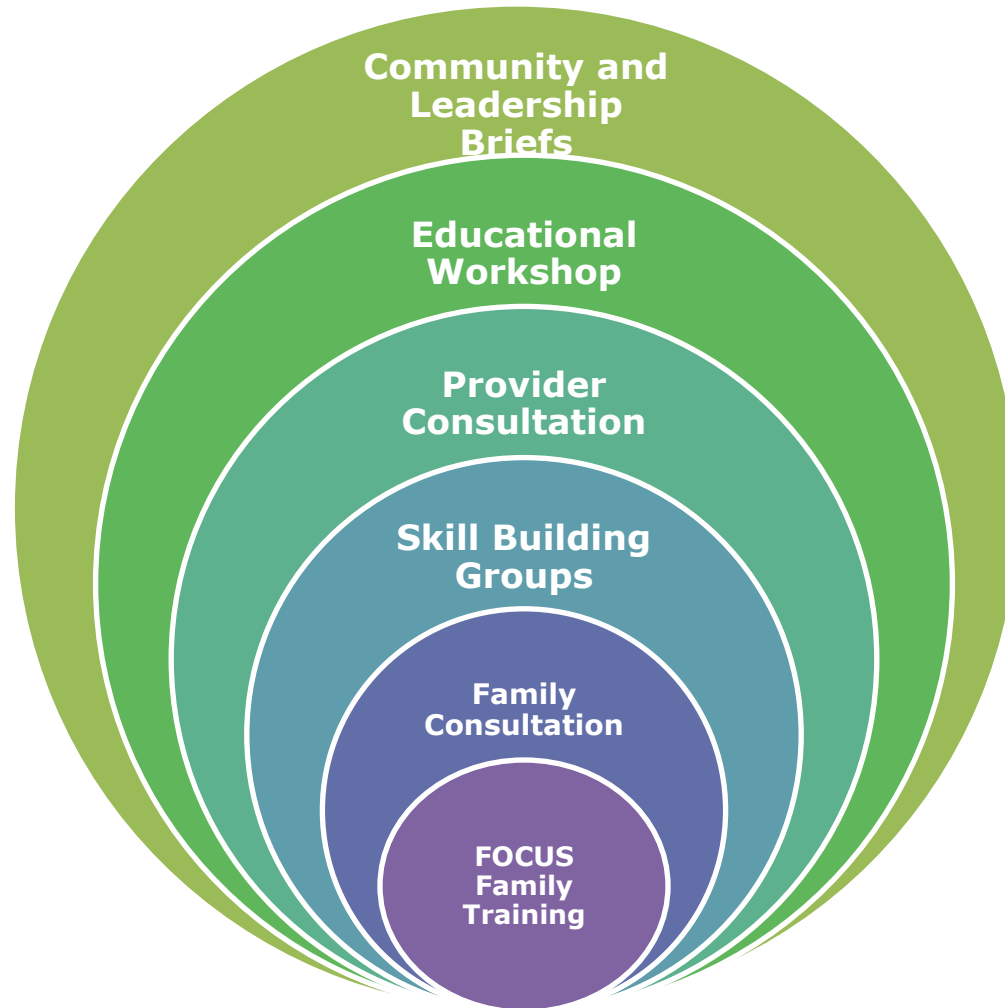
*Beardslee, Lester, Klosinski et al; Prevention Science, 2011*

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Universal



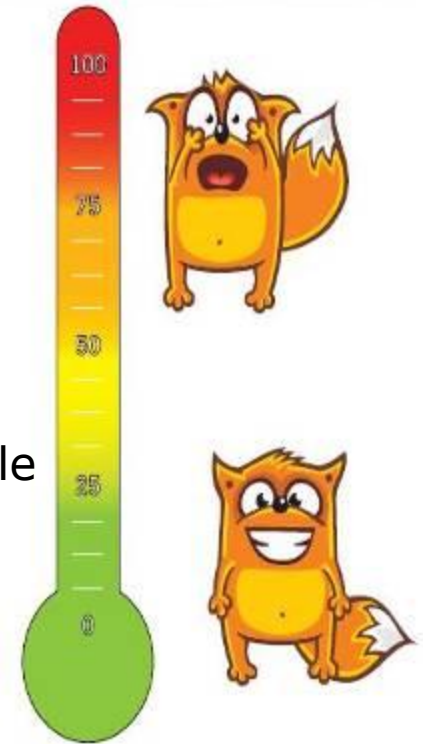
Indicated



# FOCUS Resiliency Training Core Components

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- ❑ Family real time check-up: Customizes services to family needs
- ❑ Family level education: Combat Operational Stress Continuum, developmental guidance
- ❑ Family deployment timeline
  - ❑ Link skills to family (and child) experience
  - ❑ Develop shared family meaning
  - ❑ Bridge estrangements
  - ❑ Co-parenting
- ❑ Family level resiliency skills across the deployment cycle
  - ❑ Emotional regulation
  - ❑ Problem solving
  - ❑ Communication
  - ❑ Goal setting
  - ❑ Managing deployment reminders





# FOCUS Skills Build Stronger Families

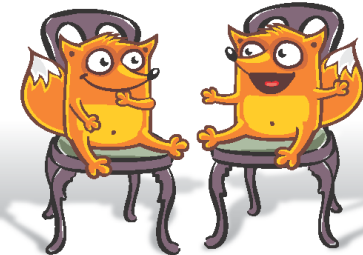
## Managing Feelings:

Naming how you feel and calming yourself down



## Communication:

Saying what you think, feel, and need and using good listening skills when someone talks to you



## Goal Setting:

Making a plan to achieve something that you want to do



## Problem Solving:

Identifying problems and creating solutions to them



## Coping with Deployment Reminders:

Learning how to manage challenging thoughts and experiences





# FOCUS on Emotional Regulation

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Emotional Regulation

# Individual Family Resiliency Training

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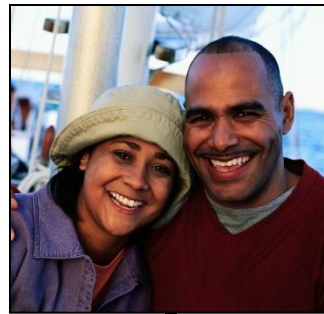
Parents only



Children only



Parents only



Family Sessions



Sessions 1 & 2

Sessions 3 & 4

Session 5

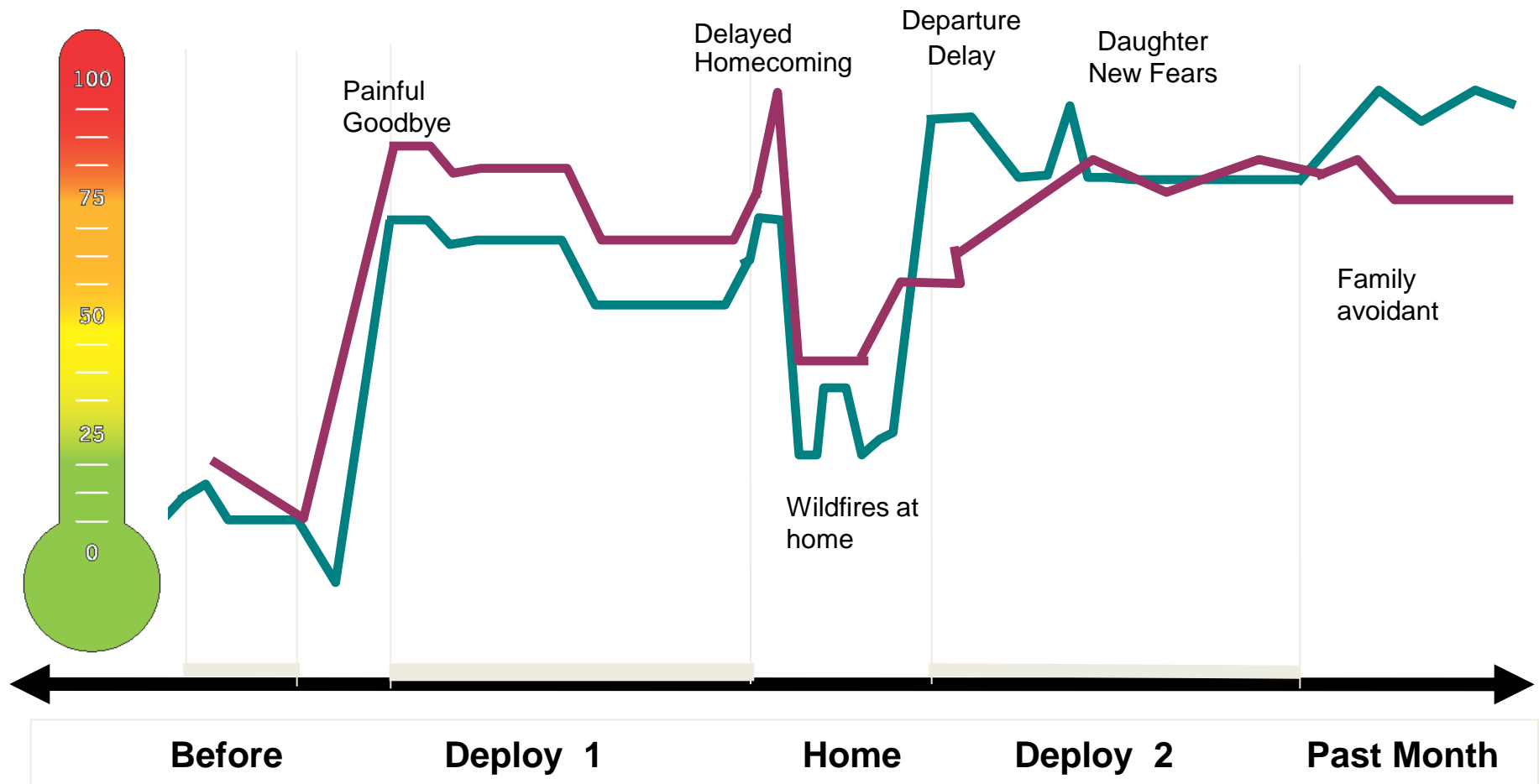
Sessions 6 - 8

# The Family Deployment Timeline

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The Family  
Deployment Timeline

# Dual Parental Timeline



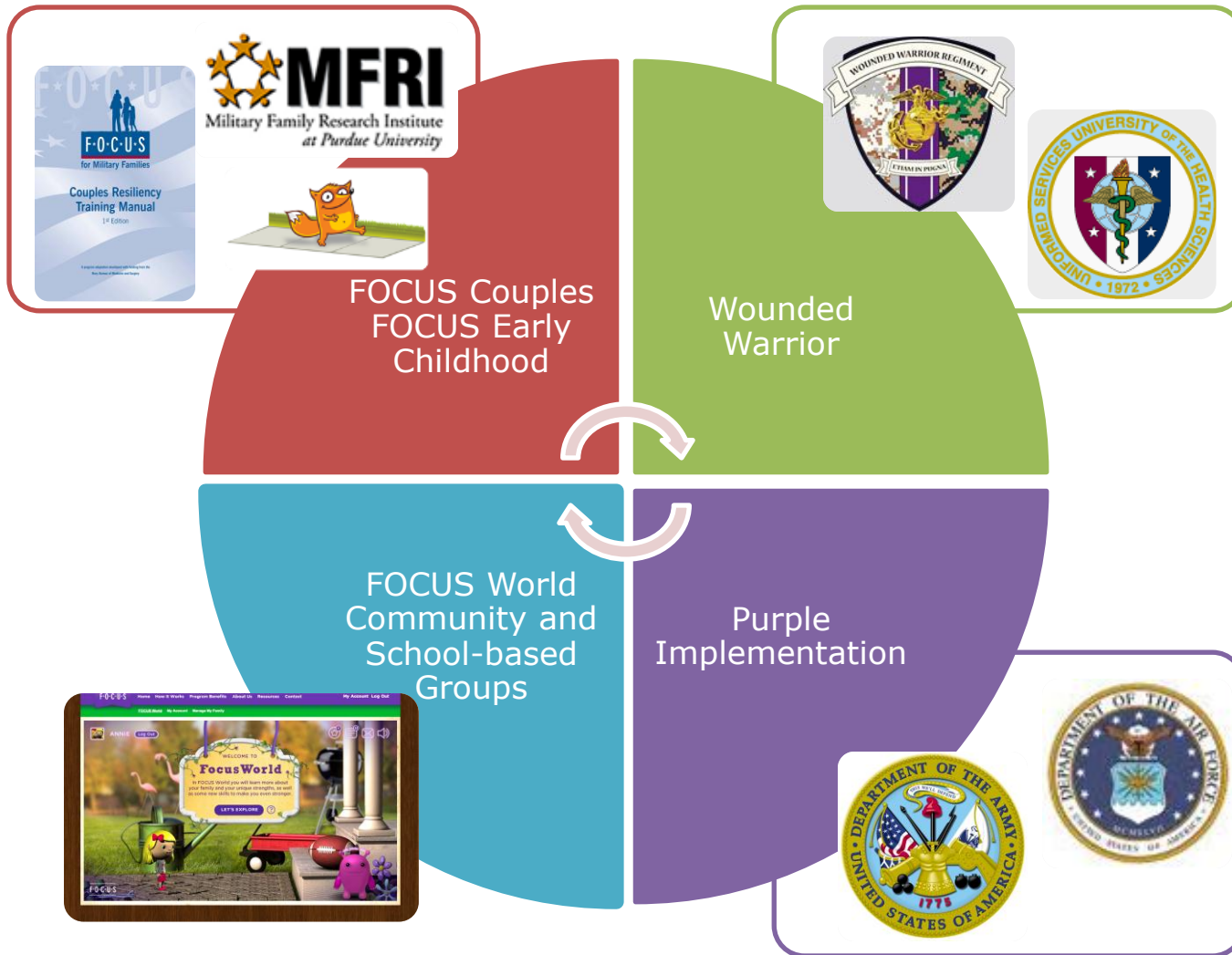
Purple: Spouse; Green: Service Member

# FOCUS on Communication

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Communication


# FOCUS Adaptations






# FOCUS Online Learning Center: Coordinated with National Center for Child Traumatic Stress

**PEOPLE**

 Participants

**ADMINISTRATION**


 Profile

## FOCUS: Advanced Training

Provides Resiliency Training for Military Families.

1


**Media**




**Monthly Training Updates**



**Serving Military Families**



**Special Topics**

**Tools for Skill Building****Adaptations**



**FOCUS HQ STAFF**

Patricia Lester  
Greg Leskin  
Bill Saltzman  
Sara Green  
Blair Paley  
Catherine Mogil  
Julie D'Amico

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**COURSE LINKS**

**Knowledge Checks**  
Check back each month

**Discussion Board**  
Make general comments,  
respond to others

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**ONLINE USERS**

(last 5 minutes)

 Julie D'Amico

# FOCUS & Social Media



**Wall**

- Info
- Friend Activity
- Photos

**About**

In FOCUS, families develop a shared understanding of how their own deployment...

More

**607**  
like this

**20**  
talking about this

**Likes** [See All](#)



**Military Child Ed...**

## Focus Project for Military Families



Non-Profit Organization



### Wall



#### Focus Project for Military Families

Happy Valentine's Day from FOCUS!

<http://blog.uso.org/2012/02/14/the-usos-love-connection/>



#### The USO's Love Connection

[blog.uso.org](http://blog.uso.org)

Here at the USO, our mission is to lift the spirits of America's troops and their families. During any holiday, it can be difficult for deployed troops and their families to stay upbeat. Bu...

Like · Comment · Share · about an hour ago ·



#### Focus Project for Military Families

To all our bold military families:

"Distance is not for the fearful, it is for the bold. It's for those who are willing to spend a lot of time alone in exchange for a little time with the one they love. It's for those knowing a good thing when they see it, even if they don't see it nearly enough..."

Like · Comment · Share · February 10 at 5:58pm ·

10 people like this.

Write a comment...

# More FOCUS Communication Tools



F·O·C·U·S

Home

How It Works

Program Benefits

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Resources

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FOCUS World

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Like us on Facebook

f Like 607

Over one million children and their families are facing the challenges that come with a parent's wartime deployment.



04:39

vimeo



## FOCUS: Family Resiliency Training™ for Military Families

### Strengthening the Home Base

FOCUS (Families OverComing Under Stress™) provides resiliency training to military children and families. It

### Why Focus?

As a service initiated by the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED), FOCUS Project addresses concerns

### The Deployment Spiral

Learn new skills to work through the unique challenges of each stage of deployment.

[www.focusproject.org](http://www.focusproject.org)

F·O·C·U·S



# FOCUS Quarterly

► How It Works ► Program Benefits ► About Us ► Resources

► View eMail in Browser

## F\*O\*C\*U\*S Quarterly

### Faces of FOCUS

My job at FOCUS has enabled me to interact with many different types of military families, from all branches of service, and from many different locations. Whether there are multiple kids in the family or no children at all, separation is challenging to all types of relationships. Having listened to many family narratives, I've heard repeatedly that deployment is especially hard during the holiday season. Holidays involve so much: preparing, shopping, cooking, planning, dining, playing, connecting, celebrating, laughing, singing, and then ... after the cleaning ... reflecting back on all of it. That's the best part, isn't it? Holidays are for building memories. To quote a popular television show from the nineties, *The Wonder Years*, "Memory is a way of holding onto the things you love, the things you are, the things you never want to lose." So how do we go about making holiday memories if we aren't with our loved ones?

This is a question I've been pondering a lot lately, as one of my loved ones is about to deploy to Afghanistan. As we approach the final countdown, there are many things at play: the "emotional cycles"; the need for a communication plan; the pride about the mission; and the awareness that the holidays will be spent separately.

This deployment starts at the end of October and ends in April. So, during this time period, we'll miss the following holidays: Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's, Valentine's, St. Patty's, and the start of Spring. While I am looking forward to the wonderful summer holidays we will be able to spend together, like Memorial Day and 4th of July, it will be difficult to be apart during the seasons in between.

So, I've decided to conduct a little experiment. I'm going to find a way to celebrate all of these holidays with my loved one before departure.

- **Thanksgiving:** Cooking a feast on Thursday is a great idea. Does it have to be in November? Why not make a turkey dinner on some other Thursday ...

### November is Military Family Month



FOCUS would like to offer our heartfelt thanks to all Service Members and their families for the incredible sacrifices you make each and every day.

For information and resources on how your installation or community can celebrate Military Family Month check out Military Homefront, [www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil](http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil), or the Armed Services YMCA Military Family Month site, [www.asymca.org](http://www.asymca.org).

### For Those in the Know

**Military Child Education Coalition**

# FOCUS World: Online Resiliency Training



# Origins of FOCUS World

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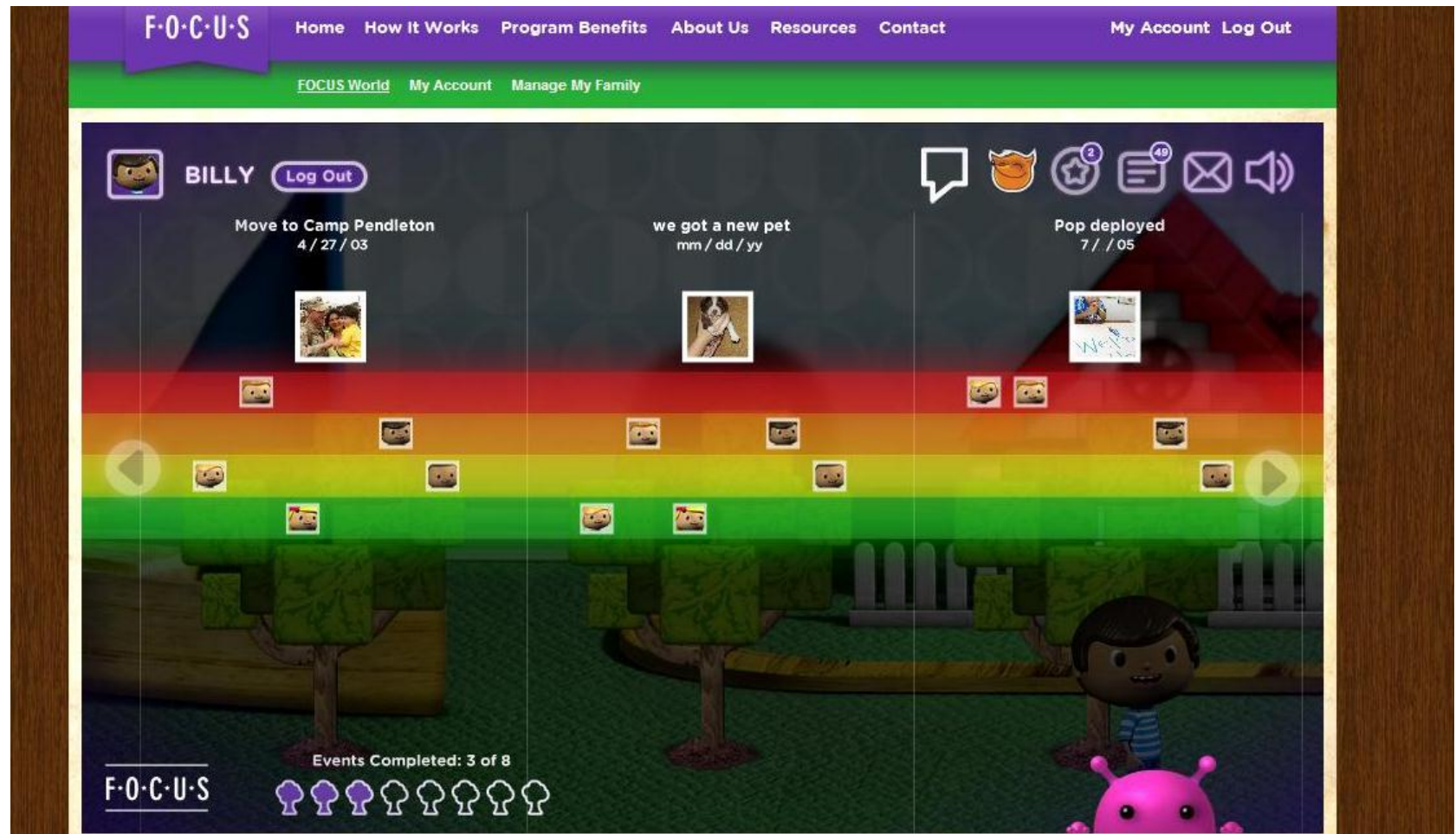
- Goal: Create a secure component of the FOCUS public website for military families to access an adapted web-based, interactive resiliency training and parent education curriculum
  - Increase family level support and cohesion
  - Teach same key resiliency and wellness skills
    - ▣ Emotional Regulation
    - ▣ Goal Setting
    - ▣ Communication
    - ▣ Problem Solving
    - ▣ Dealing with Deployment Reminders
  - Provide developmentally informed education to parents at a distance



# FOCUS World - Emotional Regulation



# FOCUS World – Deployment Timeline





# FOCUS World - Parent Education

The screenshot displays the FOCUS World Parent Education website. The top navigation bar is purple with the FOCUS logo and links for Home, How It Works, Program Benefits, About Us, Resources, and Contact. A secondary green bar contains links for FOCUS World, My Account, and Manage My Family. The main content area features a large, ornate gold frame with a yellow background, containing the text "WELCOME TO THE Video Library" and a description of the video library's purpose. Below this frame is a "CONTINUE EXPLORING" button. To the left of the frame, there is a user profile for "BILLY" with a "Log Out" button. To the right, there is a circular profile picture of a woman and a notification icon. A purple notification box on the right side of the screen contains an exclamation mark icon and the text "Attention Parents: The Parent Study contains subject matter that may not be appropriate for young children. Parents should preview videos." At the bottom of the page, there is a "VIEW PARENT RESOURCES" button with a downward arrow. The FOCUS logo is also visible in the bottom left corner. The background of the main content area is a red and orange striped wall with several framed pictures of families and a small cartoon character standing in front of one of the frames.

F·O·C·U·S

Home How It Works Program Benefits About Us Resources Contact

My Account Log Out

FOCUS World My Account Manage My Family

BILLY Log Out

WELCOME TO THE  
**Video Library**

Pull up a chair and watch videos that demonstrate helpful techniques used to talk about common family challenges. Here you will also find tools and activities for your family to download

CONTINUE EXPLORING

**Attention Parents**

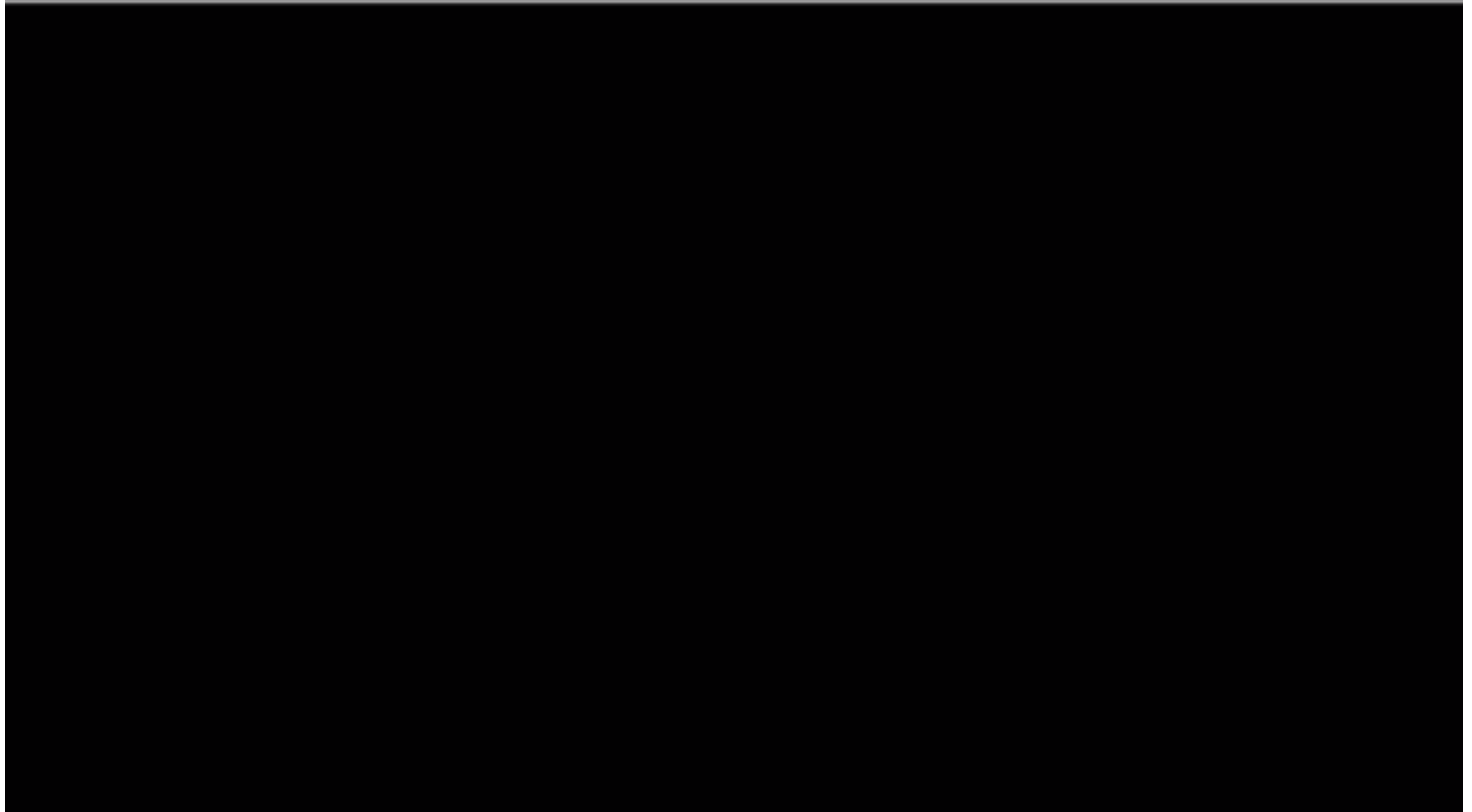
The Parent Study contains subject matter that may not be appropriate for young children. Parents should preview videos

VIEW PARENT RESOURCES

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# FOCUS on Managing Deployment Reminders

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# Deep Breathing for Children

## NOTE TO PARENTS:

Sit down with your child and explain that you're going to learn a new type of breathing: deep breathing (or abdominal breathing). Ask them to take a few slow, deep breaths and let their tummy push out as their lungs fill with air, and naturally let it go out, as the air leaves their lungs.

In a soothing voice, read the following script:

We are going to take several deep breaths.

In, 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

Breathe in through your nose and out through your nose. If breathing out through your nose is hard, you can exhale through your mouth.

In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

Notice your breathing. Where does the air go once it is inside your body? Is the air coming into your chest? Or is it coming down into your belly?

In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3. In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

Try moving the air all the way to the bottom of your lungs down into your

belly. You can put your hand on your stomach. When you are breathing deeply into your belly, your hand should rise and fall as you inhale and exhale.

In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

When you breathe deeply, the air comes deeper into your lungs and delivers fresh oxygen to your muscles all over your body.

In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

Keep breathing in slowly and breathing out slowly.

In 1, 2, 3, out 1, 2, 3.

Continue breathing deeply into your abdomen for five more refreshing breaths.



[www.focusproject.org](http://www.focusproject.org)

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# How To Hold A Family Meeting

As family leaders, parent(s) decide to begin holding family meetings.

Work together as a family to get everyone's commitment to the process.

Describe the meetings as an opportunity for the whole family to meet without anything else going on (meals, games, TV, relatives) to talk about goals & plans and strengthen what is already so great about the family.

Decide together when and where to hold meetings.

Parent(s) lead the first meeting and share leader duties as the meetings continue.

Create Family Meeting groundrules at the beginning of the meeting. Some examples:

- Listen to others
- One person talks at a time
- Respect
- Kind words
- No criticism
- No fighting

Throughout the meeting, parent(s) model praise and encouragement, active listening, asking open-ended questions and supporting everyone in sharing.

Try using a "sharing object" to facilitate discussion. Only the person holding the object is allowed to speak.

Or try using the "go around" method. Choose a topic, for example: something nice that happened today or last week, and then go around and have everyone answer the topic.

Before ending the meeting decide on the next family meeting date and put it on the calendar.

End the meeting by having everyone say one thing they learned or gained from the meeting, close with an activity, a game, a story or a fun plan!

## FOCUS Headquarters

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## FOCUS – CARE



# Remote Family Resiliency Training

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## Communication & Remote Education (CARE)

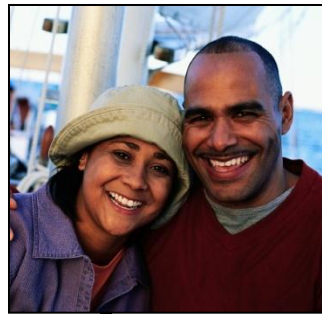
Session 1



Session 2



Session 3



Session 4



Session 5

Introductions  
*Family*  
*Meetings*

*Keeping our*  
*Cool*

*Talking to*  
*each other*  
*&*  
*Coming to*  
*TERMS*

*Bringing us*  
*together*

*Preparing for*  
*our Future*

# FOCUS Outcomes

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- ❑ Support more open and effective communication
- ❑ Assist parents to work together to monitor interactions and maintain consistent routines
- ❑ Address ongoing interference of trauma or loss reminders on parenting and family life
- ❑ Address impact of combat operational reactions and injuries across the family
- ❑ Develop positive coping skills to address challenges, build resiliency, and enhance readiness within the family



# FOCUS Sites

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## ❑ **California**

- ❑ MCB Camp Pendleton
- ❑ MCAGCC Twentynine Palms
- ❑ Naval Base Ventura County
- ❑ Naval Base San Diego
- ❑ NSW/EOD West

## ❑ **Hawaii**

- ❑ MCB Hawaii
- ❑ Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam
- ❑ Schofield Barracks
- ❑ Wheeler Army Airfield

## ❑ **Japan**

- ❑ MCB Okinawa
- ❑ Kadena AB
- ❑ Torii Station



## ❑ **Mississippi**

- ❑ Naval CBC Gulfport
- ❑ Keesler Air Force Base
- ❑ Camp Shelby

## ❑ **North Carolina**

- ❑ MCB Camp Lejeune

## ❑ **Virginia**

- ❑ MCB Quantico
- ❑ NAVSTA Norfolk
- ❑ NSW/EOD East

## ❑ **Washington**

- ❑ NAS Whidbey Island
- ❑ Joint Base Lewis-McChord



# Acknowledgments

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US Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

US Marine Corps Combat Operational Stress Control Program

Office of Military Community and Family Policy (OSD)

